

CONTROLLING WEEDS AND BRUSH

Controlling weeds and brush in your pasture will increase forage production, carrying capacity and ultimately, your profits.

Weeds and brush compete for valuable nutrients and water. Every pound of weeds means less pounds of desirable forage.

Grass in weed-free pastures form thicker stands, which cattle and sheep graze more uniformly, thus wasting less forage.

Effective management of weeds starts with identification of undesirable plants. Paddocks should be scouted regularly during the growing season and treated with suitable weed control practices.

Prevention

Good land management will help keep desirable vegetation healthy and weeds under control.

Seeding

Most annual, biennial and perennial weed species are effectively controlled once a thick legume-grass or grass sod is established.

Biological control

Sometimes nature finds a way to weaken or kill a weed species. For instance, certain fungi and insects attack seed heads and other plant parts.

Livestock grazing

Graze weeds before they go to seed because livestock can easily carry and spread seeds on their coats or in their waste. Livestock will control most plants they can eat, and many weed species are palatable and nutritious to livestock if grazed before seed head formation.



Weed free pastures are a result of good management.

Mechanical control

Mowing weeds or harvesting hay before weeds go to seed may help eliminate them in paddocks. Clipping in the fall can help control tree seedlings such as buckbrush, hazelbrush and others. Some regrowth may occur, but clipping can reduce the chances of brush taking over the pasture. Clipping also weakens weeds as they go into winter, making control easier the next year.

Chemical herbicides

Herbicides may be expensive, but are effective when applied in the proper amounts and at the proper time of year. Fall spraying with 2-4,D may be effective in many grass pastures. New weeds that started in late summer and weeds that regrow after clipping are especially vulnerable. Read label instructions carefully and follow directions.

Herbicides may also be used to manage unpalatable woody shrubs and brushes. However, when controlling brushes, trees and large shrubs, consider leav-

ing some for a field windbreak. Fencing livestock away from windbreaks encourages grazing in open pastures while providing excellent protection for livestock.

Burning

Native or warm season grasses may benefit from periodic burning. Burning stimulates growth by reducing competition from weedy plants and removes excess plant residue.

All of these weed and brush control practices may influence livestock distribution. Think about the results of these practices before you apply them to ensure they will have a positive effect on grazing and will result in more plant and animal production.

*"The better job I do of grazing,
the fewer weeds I have."*

*Greg Koether
Clayton County farmer*